



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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10 November 2005

### BLR100647.E

Belarus: Situation regarding fraudulent documents provided by organized crime networks to individuals seeking to leave the country (January 2003 - November 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the situation regarding fraudulent documents provided by organized crime networks to individuals seeking to leave Belarus was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In February 2005, the Belarusian news and information agency (BelaPAN) and Interfax reported that Belarusian and Israeli authorities had detained members of an international organized crime syndicate that shipped Belarusian women to Tel Aviv with fake passports (BelaPAN 25 Feb. 2005; Interfax 25 Feb. 2005). The women, ostensibly registered as domestics (BelaPAN 25 Feb. 2005), were "subjected to sexual exploitation" once in Israel (ibid.; Interfax 25 Feb. 2005).

*Country Reports 2004* mentioned that some Belarusian traffickers of human beings, primarily employment agencies such as travel and modeling agencies, were connected to organized crime networks (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5), although further information on the involvement of Belarusian traffickers in preparing fraudulent documents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints.

German diplomatic officials told the Belarus Press Agency (BelTA) in May 2005 that their embassy in Belarus was rejecting an increasing proportion of visa applications because of the increased use of false documents used by Belarusian applicants (BelTA 3 May 2005).

According to BelaPAN, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has initiated a program entitled "'Enhancing Border Management in the Republic of Belarus' Program (Bombel 1 Program)" (1 Sept. 2005). The program has a budget of nearly 5,000,000 euros [or approximately CAN\$7,000,000 (XE.com 8 Nov. 2005)], and will be implemented by the end of 2005 (BelaPAN 1 Sept. 2005). One of the program's principal objectives is to improve border control procedures, including "efficiently detecting border offenders and forged documents" (ibid.).

On 12 December 2003, Belarusian TV reported the detention by Brest border guards of a group of Moldavian nationals who had paid US\$1,000 in Moscow to obtain fake Russian passports in order to illegally cross the border between Belarus and Poland. Belarusian TV added that between January and December 2003, Brest border guards had detained more than 100 people who tried to cross the border with forged passports (12 Dec. 2003).

In the spring of 2003, leaders of an illegal migration network (one Lithuanian citizen and two Belarusian citizens) were reportedly convicted in Homel, Belarus for having "sent migrants with high-quality forged passports" to the United States, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, via the checkpoint at Minsk's airport (BelaPAN 21 May 2003).

In 2005, Belarusian security officials arrested a suspected Chechen "terrorist" by the name of Numaritamet Khatoyev at Minsk's airport after he presented a fraudulent passport at a checkpoint (RIA Novosti 29 Mar. 2005; OANA 21 May 2005). The man was subsequently extradited to Russia (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### References

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Russian Information Agency Novosti (RIA Novosti) [Moscow]. 29 March 2005. "Man Suspected of Organizing Terrorist Act in Dubrovka Detained in Belarus." (Factiva)

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

A staff attorney at the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (CEELI) in Minsk could not respond to requests to information within time constraints.

**Internet Sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI); Belarus Helsinki Committee; British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); Council of Europe Organized Crime Situation Report; *The Economist* [London]; Embassy of Belarus in Washington, DC; European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI); European Law Enforcement Organization (EUROPOL); Freedom House; Human Rights Watch (HRW); International Crisis Group (ICG); International Helsinki Federation (IHF); Interpol; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Radio Free Europe - Organized Crime and Terrorism Watch; Transparency International; World News Connection (WNC).

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